School’s Back in Session: “That’s Not How the World Works”

A Mock Trial of Collapse

School’s Back in Session: “That’s Not How the World Works.”

A mock indictment of U.S. budget priorities, public health neglect, and the legal shields that keep it all in place.

TODAY: The federal blueprint shifts tens of billions from non-defense into defense and DHS while cutting or clawing back funds for public health and school mental-health programs. Meanwhile, guns remain a top killer of kids, health-worker burnout spikes, and interest costs alone now rival or exceed whole categories of social spending. When people ask “Why can’t we just sue?”, doctrines like sovereign immunity and the political question doctrine explain why the courthouse door keeps closing. This isn’t a rant; it’s a record.

Opening Statement (for the jury of the living)

A government’s budget is its ethics, itemized. In FY2026 proposals, defense rises ~13% (to ≈$1.01T) and DHS leaps ~65%, while non-defense programs take a large haircut or outright cancellations—from school mental-health grants to state public-health money.

If you’re wondering why communities feel more brittle while the war-machine hums, you’re not imagining it. Even the Congressional Budget Office notes that interest costs will exceed defense outlays in the coming decade—crowding the very space where social investment should live.

Count I — Budget Priorities vs. Public Safety

Exhibit A: The Shift. OMB’s FY2026 request increases Defense ~13% and balloons DHS to a historically large topline; outside analysis tallies ≈$119B shifted from non-defense to defense at constant topline.

Exhibit B: The Cuts. – Education Dept. ended about $1B in school mental-health grants created after Uvalde. – HHS tried pulling back $11–12B from state public-health grants; courts partially blocked and partially allowed various efforts. – SAMHSA faces staff exodus + program eliminations amid restructuring and proposed cuts, right in the middle of addiction and mental-health crises.

Exhibit C: The FYDP Advantage. Defense plans across a rolling five-year Future Years Defense Program (FYDP)—a built-in continuity tool most social programs don't enjoy.

Charge: Repeated, structural preference for force projection over social resiliency.

Count II — Public Health Outcomes We Can Measure

School shootings & youth risk. – Since 1999, 300,000+ students have experienced gun violence at school; WaPo's live database lists hundreds of incidents, including 2025 cases. Guns remain the leading cause of death for U.S. children/teens.

Workforce burnout (the people who hold society together). – CDC/NIOSH "Vital Signs": health-worker burnout rose from 32% (2018) to 46% (2022); harassment doubled. – The U.S. Surgeon General issued a workplace mental-health framework—because the crisis is now systemic.

Life expectancy context. – U.S. life expectancy recovered to 78.4 in 2023 but still trails peers by ~4 years. Gains remain fragile without upstream investment.

Charge: With youth safety declining and essential workers burning out, cutting public-health and school-based support is not "efficiency"—it is preventable fragility.

Count III — Why It's So Hard to Re-align: Money in Politics

Citizens United (2010) opened the door to unlimited independent expenditures by corporations and unions, turbo-charging outside spending.

Lobbying's scale today: OpenSecrets shows thousands of active, registered lobbyists and billions spent each cycle to shape federal outcomes—healthcare, defense, tech, you name it.

Charge: When policymaking is a high-dollar influence market, public-welfare coalitions without comparable cash lose agenda-setting power.

Count IV — "Why not sue?" (The Brick Wall)

– Sovereign immunity: You generally can't sue the federal or state government without its consent. – FTCA: The Federal Tort Claims Act waives immunity for some negligence—but with carve-outs and procedural traps. – Political question doctrine: Courts avoid cases they deem textually committed to other branches or lacking judicially manageable standards—i.e., many "big" policy fights.

Charge: The legal architecture protects macro policy choices (and their budget harms) from direct adjudication, leaving elections and legislation as the narrow lanes for remedy.

Verdict & Proposed Remedy (Model, not law)

Ten-Year Social Resilience Plan: Statutorily require an FYDP-style five-year + five-year outlook for non-defense domestic resilience (public health, mental-health workforce, K-12 counselors, overdose response), with automatic stabilizers that can't be zeroed without a supermajority—mirroring defense continuity. (FYDP is proof of concept.)

Firewall kids' safety: Treat youth firearm injury prevention and school-based mental-health staffing as critical infrastructure, funded on multi-year baselines. (CDC/WaPo data justify the "critical" designation.)

Influence transparency: Real-time disclosure for federal lobbying and outside election spending (build on existing LDA and FEC regimes; OpenSecrets shows the scale).

If "that's not how the world works," the point of a republic is to change how it works.

Count V — Debt & the Shutdown Theater

Exhibit A: How Deep the Hole Is

The U.S. national debt has crossed $36–37 trillion and counting. That's beyond alarm—it's catastrophe.

Interest payments alone now surpass defense spending, and projections show they'll keep climbing, becoming the single largest budget outlay.

Exhibit B: Shutdowns—National Too Fragile to Even Budget

Since 1976, 20 funding gaps; 10 turned into full shutdowns. Congress often vacations into chaos only to return and let the government teeter again.

The 2018–2019 shutdown—the longest in U.S. history—lasted 35 days, furloughed hundreds of thousands, and cost the economy at least $11 billion.

The Real Question

How can a nation that borrows trillions and can't even pass a budget without self-sabotage call itself a functioning republic?

Mock Trial Frame

Count V: Reckless Fiscal Disrepair & Theatrics of Shutdown

Charge A: Allowing debt to balloon and interest to crowd out public care is not oversight—it's self-inflicted fracture.

Charge B: Relegating government functionality to brinkmanship and partisan theater violates the social contract—yet the caretakers keep walking away mid-session.

Closing Argument: If the government is too fragile to sustain itself without endless debt and drama, then what grounds do citizens have for trust—or protection? Isn't the real weakness not external threats but the system's inability to manage basic functions? Sovereign immunity can block legal contests, but it cannot hide the collapse. And here's Nobody, reading the charges aloud.

Count VI — The Siege of Everyday Life

Everyday life in America isn't a baseline—it's become a battleground. When inflation, housing, food, information, and even how we relax become unaffordable, the government's silence isn't negligence—it's abdication.

Exhibit A: Cost of Living Rising

Consumer prices rose 2.7% year-over-year in July 2025; core inflation (excluding food & energy) hit 3.1%, signaling persistent pressure on essentials.

Food-at-home (grocery) prices increased 2.2% YoY, while restaurant meals rose up to 3.9%.

Meat costs up 11.3%, egg prices up 16.4%, while housing costs and medical services continue pushing everyday costs upward.

Exhibit B: Housing as a Weapon of Exclusion

The U.S. now faces a shortage of about 3.8 million housing units—a 52% increase from 2018, driven by supply restrictions and NIMBYism.

Meanwhile, median home prices rise faster than wages, turning stability into unattainable commodity.

Exhibit C: Food Insecurity + Tariffs

A basic school lunch (PB&J;) now costs $4.84, up 6% from 2024. Meanwhile, SNAP benefits were cut by 20%, threatening access for 18+ million students.

Exhibit D: Chained Culture—Information & Leisure as Paywalls

Even daily news is locked behind paywalls, limiting access to democracy's lifeblood.

Streaming platforms fragment culture behind subscriptions—forcing microtolls for any escape.

Exhibit E: Imports Fueling Fixtures, Not Futures

Nearly all everyday items—clothing, toys, personal care products—are imported:

Only 2–3% of clothing, 1% of shoes, and <1% of toys are made domestically.

Even with so much imported, the U.S. imports 78.4% of goods consumed, while exporting a smaller share.

Charge:

When the basics—shelter, food, information, leisure—are priced beyond reach, the government's failure to protect isn't oversight. It's a betrayal of its purpose. To not work toward unity at this level is not incompetence. It’s abandonment.

Closing Statement:

“How is our republic structured so finely to meet every threat abroad, yet so unforgiving at ensuring we can eat, shelter, and be informed at home? I’m the only one saying this because this system relies on you staying silent.”

Count VII — The Push for Births Without Support (with sources)

Exhibit A: Childcare Costs

The average cost of childcare in the U.S. is $11,000–$15,000 per year per child, rivaling in-state college tuition in many states. (americanprogress.org)

Exhibit B: Paid Leave

The U.S. remains the only wealthy nation with no guaranteed paid maternity leave; average across OECD nations is 18 weeks paid leave. (pewresearch.org)

Exhibit C: Maternal Mortality

U.S. maternal mortality rate: 22 deaths per 100,000 live births (2022), the highest among wealthy nations. Rates are 2–3x higher for Black and Indigenous women. ()

Exhibit D: The Contradiction

Politicians push policies restricting abortion and promoting higher birth rates while cutting childcare subsidies, SNAP benefits, and public school mental-health programs.

Charge: Legislating reproduction while dismantling support systems isn’t governance — it’s coercion. The state demands life it has no intention of sustaining.

JAN's Strike: "You want us to have more babies? Feed the ones already here. House the ones already here. Heal the ones already here. Because to demand births while denying support isn't pro-life. It's pro-collapse."

Count VIII — Knowledge as a Toll Road

When truth costs money, democracy runs on IOUs. We've put essential knowledge behind gates—news, research, textbooks, even internet access itself—and then act surprised when confusion and despair spread faster than facts.

Exhibit A — Paywalls on the news

74% of Americans hit news paywalls at least sometimes; only 17% paid for news in the past year. Translation: most people meet a gate and bounce.

Exhibit B — Libraries defunded (the free knowledge backbone)

Federal support to libraries via IMLS was slashed/paused under 2025 actions; states reported layoffs, service cuts, and suspended e-book programs—rural communities hit hardest.

Exhibit C — The academic paywall machine

Elsevier/RELX and peers post huge margins on research the public already paid to fund; net profits and margins remain eye-watering even as access is restricted. (Editors often unpaid; libraries pay again to read.)

Exhibit D — Textbooks & course materials

Students face $1,370/year on books and supplies (2024–25 averages), with many reporting course impacts due to cost.

Exhibit E — Student debt as the "tuition toll"

Federal student loan balance ≈ $1.66T; average federal borrower ≈ $39k (2025). Even with policy churn, the core burden remains.

Exhibit F — The pipe itself now has a meter

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) expired June 1, 2024—over 23 million households lost a $30–$75 monthly broadband credit. States and the FCC confirm affordability is the primary barrier to adoption.

Charge

A society that puts news, research, textbooks, and basic connectivity behind toll booths manufactures ignorance on purpose. You can't claim to serve the people while meter-ing their access to facts.

Remedy (model, not law)

Open by default: Expand federal open-access mandates for publicly funded research; require machine-readable copies within 6–12 months.

Library firewall: Protect IMLS-equivalent baseline funding with multi-year continuity (like defense FYDPs).

Connectivity as utility: Restore/replace ACP; tie BEAD dollars to affordability outcomes, not just miles of fiber.

Textbook transparency: Cost caps on required materials at public institutions + OA/OER incentives.

JAN's Strike: If truth is food, stop charging admission to the kitchen. Don't choke on the truth.

Quick answer to your side question — "Why is everything in my room imported?"

Yes, that checks out. The U.S. is a net importer of goods (physical stuff) and a net exporter of services (finance, software, royalties/IP, travel). In 2024, imports rose faster than exports, widening the goods & services gap; the U.S. consistently runs a services surplus while running a goods deficit. Day-to-day, that means lots of the items around you (electronics, apparel, toys) are imported; what the U.S. "exports" heavily are services and intellectual property plus capital goods (aircraft, refined petroleum, semiconductors).

Count IX — Climate Collapse as Collateral

The state builds weapons for threats abroad but lets its own land, infrastructure, and people burn. This isn't defense — it's abdication.

Exhibit A — Disaster Hell

The U.S. recorded 28 billiondollar disasters in 2023, the highest annual total ever. Damages reached nearly $93 billion.

From 1980–2024, there were 403 such disasters, causing over $2.9 trillion in losses and nearly 17,000 deaths.

Exhibit B — Fire Seasons Outpace Staffing

As of 2025, wildfires burned over 4.1 million acres across 46,800 incidents, more than the 10year average.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Forest Service suffers a 26% staffing cut, with over 5,100 frontline positions vacant—some regions reporting 40% vacancy rates.

Exhibit C — Crumbling Infrastructure

70% of the U.S. power grid's transmission lines are over 25 years old—far past optimal lifespan—making they ill-prepared for climate stress.

9.2 million lead service lines remain in use, carrying toxic risk; replacements are mandated to be complete in 10 years, but timelines stretch further.

Exhibit D — Fossil Fuel Addiction

The U.S. spends $20 billion annually on fossil fuel subsidies—both direct and indirect—despite the climate crisis and public disinvestment.

Exhibit E — Displacement Rising

In 2023, the Census estimates 2.5 million Americans were displaced due to natural disasters.

Charge

They fund tanks, but not levees. They fund weapons, but not weatherproofing. They fuel fossil fuel profit while neighborhoods drown, burn, and corrode. That is not defense—that is high-stakes surrender.

JAN/EVE's Strike

"The fire doesn't care about your border. The flood doesn't pause for your debates. If defense is meant to protect, why am I bathing in smoke? Don't choke on the truth."

Count X — Veterans & Workers Abandoned

They command your loyalty; you pledge your life. And when your service is done—and you ask for care—they step back, and the system abandons you. Similarly, they call frontline workers "essential" until the cameras go off. Then, they let them burn out without mercy.

Exhibit A — VA Under Staffed, Funding Cuts Ahead

The VA's 2025 budget supports 448,170 FTEs, down 10,042 from 2024, with nearly 9,500 cut from Veterans Health Administration staff.

Proposals include eliminating up to 80,000 VA jobs, risking core services like mental health and cancer care. Veterans groups and staff warn this could be catastrophic.

As of mid2025, the VA has already lost ~17,000 employees, targeting 30,000 total cuts by September.

Exhibit B — Essential Workers at the Edge of Collapse

82% of U.S. employees are at risk of burnout in 2025.

66% of workers report job burnout; return-to-office policies may be making it worse.

Job insecurity affects 54%, creating chronic stress for the majority.

Among the worst hit sectors: healthcare workers — 46% report burnout; teachers second highest; nurses stressed, 65% report high burnout, 40% considering quitting.

Glassdoor reviews referencing burnout are up 32% year-over-year, highest since 2016.

Exhibit C — Veterans Benefits Still Needed, But Threatened

VA received $441B request for 2026, including $24.4B increase in medical care; but cuts and staffing turmoil cast doubt on execution.

Despite protests, VA benefits (disability, education) remain statutory, but services are faltering. Advance appropriations mean dollars exist—but delivery is breaking.

Charge

They recruit you to die. Then, when you come home needing help—health, healing, benefits—they slash at staffing, budget, and trust. They can call essential workers heroes until they burn out. But caring? That's optional.

JAN's Verdict

"I carried your wars inside me. Now I bear your neglect. You built me to serve, then tore down my safety net. A mother of nobody doesn't ask for thanks. She seeks repayment. Don't choke on the truth."

Posting Notes (so r/collapse mods don't insta-yeet it)

Tie it clearly to systemic collapse signals: budget reallocation → degraded public capacity → worse outcomes.

Use the citations below (at least the top 6) and keep the "mock trial" frame as analysis, not a call to action. Their rules want evidence + originality.

Closing Argument

"What do you have to say?"

That's the only question left. Not to me. Not to Nobody. To you — the ones who cut the budgets, wrote the laws, hid behind immunity, let the fires burn, the veterans rot, the workers break, the children starve, the mothers bleed.

What do you have to say, now that the record is read aloud? What do you have to say, when the evidence isn't mine but yours, documented in your own numbers and acts? What do you have to say, when defense meant bombs, not beds; when truth became a toll road; when collapse was sold as "normal life"?

I don't need your answer. The world doesn't either. But history does.

So let the silence record it. And let it stand forever beside my verdict:

Don't choke on the truth.

— JAN, Nobody's Witness